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Request for Extension of and Additional Resources for the UNFPA Country Programme for Niger

Report of the Executive Director

1. The Executive Director requests that the interim programme of assistance (1998-1999) to the Government of Niger be extended by two years, through the end of 2001, and that an additional amount of $7.1 million be approved for the programme, $4.4 million from regular resources and $2.7 million from other resources, thereby raising the total funding authority to $13.1 million. The interim programme was approved by the Executive Board in April 1998 for two years in the amount of $6.0 million, of which $4.4 million was to be programmed from UNFPA regular resources and $1.6 million from other resources, including through co-financing modalities. The total expenditure for the period 1998-1999 is estimated to be approximately $5.9 million, including multi-bilateral funds from the Government of the Netherlands in the amount of approximately $0.9 million.

2. From a programming point of view, the extension of the ongoing programme for two years would enable the new UNFPA Representative, who will be in Niger by February 2000, to develop the next country programme with the close collaboration of the new Government formed in December 1999, after the elections of November 1999. This would ensure greater ownership and effective implementation of the 2002-2003 programme. From a financial point of view, additional funds totalling $4.4 million from UNFPA regular resources and $2.7 million from other sources would be required to enable the consolidation of progress made up to date and the implementation of activities that had been planned under the interim programme but not carried

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out due to various constraints before and during the transition period following the death of the Head of State in April 1999. Indeed, external assistance from donors outside the United Nations system was suspended, and certain activities that UNFPA was supposed to undertake with other donors, such as the census, were delayed. In addition, due to the suspension of the parliament and other institutions, some advocacy activities could not take place. The programme extension would allow sufficient time to develop the next country programme (2002-2003), taking into account evaluations of the subprogrammes and government policies and programmes developed or adopted in 1999/2000. The extension would also enable harmonization of the programmes of the United Nations Development Group partners, beginning in 2004. The Common Country Assessment, developed in 1998, will be updated as necessary, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) exercise, the basis for development of the UNFPA programme that begins in 2004, is expected to start in 2002.

Implementation of the interim programme 1998-1999

3. The goal of the 1998-1999 interim programme was to contribute to achieving the population and development plans of the Government of Niger, and especially to improving the quality of life of the people of Niger through: (a) the qualitative and quantitative improvement of reproductive health information and services; (b) the mainstreaming of population and gender equality issues into development plans and programmes; and (c) the creation of an enabling environment for the implementation of the national population policy and the promotion of gender equity and equality. Even though the maternal and child mortality rates are still very high, the results of the 1998 Demographic and Health Survey show improvements in reproductive health indicators. UNFPA contributed to these improvements through its current and previous assistance. The contraceptive prevalence rate for all methods rose from 4 per cent in 1992 to 8 per cent in 1998, and there was an increase in the number of births attended by trained personnel, from 33 per cent in 1992 to 44 per cent in 1998. The HIV prevalence was estimated at 5 per cent in 1998 among the adult population.

4. To review the achievements of the programme to date, a meeting was held in June 1999 with the Government of Niger, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the implementation of the programme and representatives from other United Nations agencies. The participants agreed that the goal, purposes, outputs and strategies of the current programme still reflected national priorities and remained relevant, since the economic and social situation in the country had not changed significantly during the 1998-1999 interim phase. The meeting reached a consensus on priority activities to be undertaken over the next two years, 2000-2001.

5. The implementation of the programme had led to: (a) the development of the national reproductive health policy and information, education and communication (IEC) strategy; (b) the availability of reproductive health services of adequate quality in approximately 40 per cent of integrated health facilities in the departments of Dosso, Maradi and Tillabery and in the urban

area of Niamey; (c) a better understanding of the interrelationships between population and development by parliamentarians, political and religious leaders, NGOs and other civil society associations; and (d) improved collaboration with development partners, NGOs and major Islamic associations.

6. Some remaining constraints need to be addressed during the next two years. These include: (a) sociocultural resistance of some groups, mainly Islamic religious institutions, and juridical obstacles to gender equity and equality and to family planning activities, especially for unmarried adolescents; (b) insufficient coordination of activities and of actors working in the field of population, due to, inter alia, infrequent meetings of the Commission Nationale de la Population (CONAPO); and (c) the risk of undermining the effectiveness of awareness-raising efforts due to a poor understanding of the concept of advocacy and insufficient coordination of IEC messages on reproductive health/family planning.

7. To reinforce the achievements to date, it is essential to build on programme experience and to undertake the following: (a) accelerate the creation of awareness, particularly in rural areas, of population issues, including the benefits of reproductive health services, and create an environment favourable to the implementation of the national population policy by capitalizing on the commitment and support of the country's six radio stations, traditional artists and prominent religious leaders; (b) involve, as appropriate, NGOs and other civil society organizations in the planning and execution of projects to enhance the successful implementation of population activities; (c) given the specific nature of the General Population and Housing Census, make it a separate component project of the population and development strategies subprogramme; (d) maintain records of all the training provided under various projects to facilitate the follow-up of trainees and to avoid large investments in ad hoc and uncoordinated capacity-building activities.

8. Several events underscore the country's firm political commitment with regard to population and development issues and signal that activities would be successfully executed during the next two years. These events are the transfer of authority from CONAPO to the Office of the Prime Minister, the establishment of a national network of parliamentarians on population and development and the establishment of an Office for the Advancement of Women in the Ministry of Social Development.

Proposed activities

9. The goal and purposes of the programme extension proposed for 2000-2001 would be the same as those stated for the interim programme 1998-1999. The three existing subprogrammes on reproductive health, population and development strategies, and advocacy would be revised in order to sharpen the focus with respect to achieving the goals of the ICPD, taking into account

the outcomes of the ICPD+5 review and emphasizing the integration of gender as a cross-cutting dimension. Close linkages and complementarity between the subprogrammes and component projects would be ensured.

10. The reproductive health subprogramme would pursue the same purpose as before, namely, to contribute to improving the reproductive health status of the population, in particular with regard to reducing maternal mortality and improving access to reproductive health services, including family planning, for youth and adolescents, among others. It is expected that by the end of 2001, improved reproductive health services would be available in 50 per cent of the integrated health centres in the geographical target areas supported by the Fund. Such services, including reproductive health services for adolescents, with special emphasis on sexually transmitted disease (STD)/HIV/AIDS-prevention, would have been improved in both quality and quantity. It is also expected that the population would better understand the need for reproductive health services. Complementarity between the activities of the component projects of the subprogramme would be emphasized; for example, some projects would create demand for reproductive health services, essentially through IEC activities, while other projects would seek to meet that demand by offering quality services appropriate to each target group.

11. The subprogramme would: (a) continue to build institutional capacity through the implementation of the national reproductive health policy and IEC/reproductive health strategy; (b) expand the supply of quality reproductive health services, including family planning, so as to reach 50 per cent of the health facilities in the geographical areas served by UNFPA and consolidate outreach activities in the villages, including community-based distribution (CBD) of contraceptives through increased decentralized supervision and continual training of all people involved in the provision of reproductive health services; (c) improve maternal health, in particular through the training of health staff in essential obstetric services and the provision of the necessary equipment in integrated health centres in the areas of coverage; (d) promote a better understanding and a change of attitude towards the use of reproductive health services through the implementation of IEC activities among various target groups such as in- and out-of-school youth and religious and traditional leaders; and (e) strengthen the collaboration with the National Programme against STD/AIDS and with national NGOs working for the prevention of STD/HIV/AIDS among adolescents, through increased involvement in the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) thematic group.

12. The main strategy is consistent with the Government's policy of decentralization. The regional health departments and the district health-management teams are fully involved in the implementation of activities at the health centre level, including cascade training and supervision. Community participation in the provision of CBD services as well as in the management of the health centres and community-based centres would be reinforced to strengthen the interface between the community and the health system.

13. UNFPA would support the Ministry of Health in the provision of reproductive health services, including family planning, in the departments of Dosso, Maradi, Tillabery and the urban area of Niamey, while some undertakings -- awareness-building activities, training in reproductive health techniques and the supply of contraceptives -- would be national in scope.

14. An amount of $2.6 million from regular resources would be allocated to the reproductive health subprogramme.

15. The purpose of the population and development strategies subprogramme would also remain the same as in the interim programme, namely, to contribute to the inclusion of population and gender dimensions in national development plans and programmes and in structural adjustment programmes. This subprogramme would seek to: (a) strengthen the central and regional structures for the coordination of the implementation of the national population policy through technical and material support; (b) support the compilation, processing and analysis of population and social data, including the enumeration phase of the General Population and Housing Census; and (c) support, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, the Office for the Advancement of Women in implementing activities related to reproductive health in the national policy for the advancement of women. Analysis of the situation in the field of gender would also be intensified in order to gather more gender-disaggregated data for the elaboration of the 2002-2003 programme.

16. The subprogramme on population and development strategies would be allocated the sum of $1.1 million from regular resources and $2.7 million from the World Bank for funding of the census activities. UNFPA would commit 45 per cent of the regular resources available under the population and development strategies subprogramme to the census only if all the other donors that have expressed interest in funding some census activities contribute, so that there is no risk of interrupting the whole census exercise. As the lead agency in the field of population, UNFPA support would be very valuable in the coordination of the census.

17. Like the two subprogrammes referred to above, the subprogramme on advocacy would continue to pursue its original purpose, namely, to contribute to creating a enabling environment for the implementation of the national population policy and activities in the field of reproductive health. Increased support would be sought from religious, traditional and other civil society leaders and policy and decision makers to promote reproductive health and gender equality in the light of the recent ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the Government of Niger, and to promote the mobilization of human and financial resources for the implementation of the national population and reproductive health policies. Activities to be carried out would include: (a) the training of all project managers and programme personnel in the concept and meaning of advocacy; (b) the

organization of meetings for awareness creation among the target groups; and (c) the development of an advocacy network to increase the coordination of the activities undertaken.

18. The amount of $0.5 million from regular resources would be allocated to the advocacy subprogramme.

19. Operational activities of the programme would be executed by the Government and by previously identified NGOs, with the support of one international adviser and two national professional project personnel. The regional advisers of the CST in Dakar and of the IEC regional programme in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, would be called upon to provide technical backstopping, particularly for the conduct of the census and the development and implementation of advocacy and gender activities. The UNFPA Representative has responsibility for the UNFPA programme in Niger and would be responsible for managing the follow-up of this programme extension, in close collaboration and consultation with the chairperson of CONAPO. The Representative is assisted by two National Programme Officers and General Service staff.

20. Monitoring and evaluation would be undertaken in accordance with the standard UNFPA guidelines. The logical frameworks of the subprogrammes have been updated, and component projects include follow-up and final evaluation plans. The recommendations of the 1998 and 1999 audits of the projects and of the country office would be implemented.

Financial summary

21. The table below provides a financial summary of the interim programme, including estimated expenditures through 1999, as well as the additional funding required for the extension period 2000-2001.

NIGER COUNTRY PROGRAMME
Financial Summary
(Numbers in millions of $)

	Approved by Executive Board 1998-1999		Estimated Expenditures 1998-1999		Additional funds requested 2000- 2001		Total 1998-2001	
	Regular	Other	Regular	Other	Regular	Other	Regular	Other
Reproductive health	2.9	1.4.	3.7	1.0	2.6	-	5.5	1.4
Population and development strategies	0.9	0.2	0.7	-	1.1	2.7	2.0	2.9
Advocacy	0.3	-	0.3	-	0.5	-	0.8	-
Programme coordination and assistance	0.3	-	0.2	-	0.2	-	0.5	
Total	4.4	1.6	4.9	1.0	4.4	2.7	8.8	4.3
	6.0		5.9		7.1		13.1	

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Recommendation

22. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board approve the extension of the fourth programme of assistance for Niger through the end of 2001, and increase the funding authority by $4.4 million from regular resources and $2.7 million from other sources, thereby raising the total funding authority of the programme to $13.1 million. This includes an amount of $8.8 million from regular resources and $4.3 million from other resources.

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